



December 5, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of Bethany Christian Services of Michigan, we appreciate the opportunity to speak with you regarding the important issue of welcoming refugees to our communities in Michigan.

Refugees are the most vetted of all visitors to the United States. All refugees go through a rigorous security screening process. Refugees have fled persecution and are grateful for the opportunity to have a hope and a future in the United States.

West Michigan is a very welcoming area for refugees. Bethany Christian Services joins together quarterly with other refugee services' agencies to conduct community consultations. Local government officials and employees, school administrators, Department of Health and Human Services supervisors, ethnic and religious leaders, and many others are invited and encouraged to attend these gatherings. Furthermore, in November, Bethany participated in a City Leaders Breakfast, hosted by the Christian Reformed Church's Office of Social Justice to consult with local officials and leaders. Annually, Bethany also reaches out to various community stakeholders while determining its capacity for refugee resettlement. Over 150 churches and community groups have welcomed a refugee family and assisted them in becoming integrated into our communities.

Bethany's Refugee Employment Program has worked with over 400 local employers. Bethany currently has requests for over 200 employees from 40 local employers. Many local employers welcome refugees to fill vacant skilled and unskilled manufacturing and service industry positions within their company. Refugees are contributing greatly to our local economy through payment of taxes and purchasing goods from local businesses. Many will also become home and business owners.

Refugees bring a beautiful diversity to our community. HCR28 gives voice to a message that contradicts what we know to be true through community collaborations that refugees are welcome in our communities. We appreciate the rich history Michigan has in welcoming refugees and encourage you to continue this welcoming spirit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Dona M. Abbott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dona" being the most prominent.

Dona M Abbott MA,LLP
Refugee and Immigrant Services Branch Director